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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of self-assessment in teacher education. Students in a graduate educational psychology course (all of whom were teachers or counselors) documented and presented a self-assessment portfolio of their learning experiences. They were instructed to be as creative as possible. The presentations of their self-assessment portfolios were videotaped and later analyzed to design a method for providing more explicit, consistent, objective, and evaluative feedback. Two graduate assistants viewed the videotapes and generated a list of behaviors that fit into a given definition of self-assessment. They used the resulting list of behaviors to create a self-assessment evaluation tool. The videotapes were reviewed independently, and each portfolio presentation was scored by the two graduate assistants and the course professor. The group shared their independent scoring and made adaptations to the behavior list. What resulted after the third viewing of the tapes and adapting of the behavior list was a rubric with five ratings: displays ongoing reflective thought, applies what has been learned, seeks feedback from various sources, takes control of learning, and student gains confidence. The paper concludes with recommendations that emerged after analyzing the videotapes. Many of the recommendations came from the graduate students as they described the process of compiling their portfolios. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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Running head: EVALUATING SELF-ASSESSMENT

Evaluating Self-Assessment As A Means Of Professional Development

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Abstract

Self-assessment has been demonstrated to be a critical component in professional development. Reflective portfolios are often required of educators, particularly at the preservice and novice levels, as a means of facilitating the self-assessment. This project was undertaken with the goal of providing feedback for the self-assessment process. The resultant rubric is intended to provide guidelines for facilitating self-assessment for educators who wish to engage in reflective professional development and to set goals for their future enhancement.

Over the years, teachers have been continuously trying to improve their teaching techniques and styles. Van Wagnen and Hibbard (1998) used the rationale that since teachers continually ask their students to assess themselves and their peers in order to improve, it makes sense for teachers to do the same. Airasian and Gullickson (1997) suggested that teacher self-assessment was the most routine form of teacher evaluation and that it allowed teachers to concentrate on self-understanding and self-improvement. Self-assessment is important for a variety of other reasons as well. Blake, Bachman, Frys, Holbert, Ivan, and Sellitto (1995) proposed that self-assessment allows teachers to become better thinkers. They also suggested that self-assessment developed the following skills: (a.) the ability to produce alternative ideas, (b.) the ability to evaluate one's own actions, and (c.) the ability to become open-minded, i.e. to subjectively view one's own practice critically with a willingness to try new ideas. Self-assessment of a one's own skills, actions, and ideas allow for change to occur and to allow the individual to set forth the direction of the change. Self-assessment has thus been shown to be a valuable tool for teachers to improve and sustain a successful practice. It seems to be the quintessential element for individual professional development and eventual improvement of the teaching profession.

Self-assessment allows teachers to awaken to professional growth. Teachers need to see themselves as professionals who are capable of making decisions about their own practice in a way that promotes professional growth. Jarvinen and Kohonen (1995) also confirmed that "self-assessment is an important tool for professional development." Blake et al (1995) proposed that teacher self-assessment is needed because teachers should be characterized as professionals who can provide their own self-assessment, teaching improvement, and professional growth. If

teachers are less dependent on administration and more dependent on their own approach toward professional growth, then true self-assessment is possible.

Reflective portfolios are tools for gathering artifacts which prompt a professional to engage in self-assessment. Vavrus (1990) stated that reflective portfolios are goal based and induce reflective "captions" attached to each piece of evidence which conceptualize and connect evidence to goals. The reflective portfolio process builds a sense of reflection and introspection that supports or even generates the entire reflective portfolio process. Thus, the reflective portfolio not only initiates self-assessment, but is somewhat of a record of the self assessment process.

There has been a great deal of support for the use of reflective portfolios as a tool of self-assessment. Reflective portfolios cultivate self-assessment both in productive and purposeful manner. Perkins and Gelfer (1993) asserted that using portfolios as a tool for teacher growth and development could create confidence, commitment, and enthusiasm among faculty members. Blake et al (1995) suggested that portfolios allowed reflection and growth to develop during practice. Airasian and Gullickson (1997) also indicated that the use of portfolios creates a greater consciousness of a teacher's own practice which is intended to generate personal and professional growth.

Self-reflective portfolios encourage teachers to be conscious of their own teaching methods and strategies. Setteducati (1995) reported that the most beneficial aspect of reflective portfolios was that it gave teachers a chance to reflect upon their own work and possibly correct any problem(s) that they might encounter. Jarvinen and Kohonen (1995) stated that the use of reflective portfolios could help teachers to "understand complicated phenomena of their own

learning process and develop a thoughtful, inquiring basic attitude as a 'habit of mind (p. 34).'"

In a similar fashion, Borko, Michalec, Timmons, and Siddle (1997) suggested that student teacher portfolios were an instrument to promote reflective practice. They also asserted that pre-service teachers have benefitted from the use of portfolios and that it would seem likely that in-service teachers would also benefit from their use. Van Wagnen and Hibbard (1998) attested that portfolios allow teachers to do precisely what teachers request of their students. Teachers invite their students to "self-assess, self-evaluate, and self-regulate." It appears, then, that reflective portfolios are an invaluable agent to develop and encourage self-assessment practices.

Even self-assessment and reflection need some kind of structure. Certain criteria have been demonstrated essential for effective self-assessment and reflective portfolios. Airasian and Gullickson (1997) maintained that self-assessment should be formal, that is something that is concrete, and self-assessment should help teachers to be aware of their practice. Ford (1994) added that self-assessment should be approached in a continuous and ongoing manner. If reflective portfolios are used to promote and gauge self-assessment, then those reflective portfolios require both formal and ongoing assessment.

When creating an opportunity for self-assessment there are a variety of guidelines that should be incorporated to make the program successful for both the school and the teacher. Perkins and Gelfer (1993) reported that when criteria are created for portfolios, certain goals of the assessment program should also be created. For example, teachers should recognize their roles as well as their responsibilities and the characteristics of effective and successful performance. Another part of the portfolio process that is important for success is the sharing of the portfolios with peers and administrators. Setteducati (1995) suggested that reflective

portfolios should include an element of sharing because sharing allows for an in-depth examination into a teacher's practice. Sharing allows teachers to receive feedback from others to assist them in their growth as professionals

The use of portfolios provide for self-assessment and reflection not only in the final product but also during the process of creating the portfolio. Ryan and Kuhs (1993) reported that portfolios were both a process and a product. The portfolio is not only an end to a means but also the means to that end. It supplies duel benefits. Airasian and Gullickson (1997) agreed that the process of compiling a portfolio is itself part of the self-reflective process. Teacher self-assessment and reflective portfolios are meaningful instruments for the advancement of quality education at all levels. We can encourage self-assessment with the use of reflective portfolios, but teachers need feedback and structure to shape their self-assessment skills.

Purpose

The current research in teacher preparation supports the use of portfolios as a means of demonstrating proficiency at the novice level, and it has been demonstrated that providing feedback on the self-assessment process is essential. What constitutes good self-assessment? How would a novice know if their reflective portfolio demonstrates accurate and meaningful self-assessment. How can teacher education professors encourage and provide feedback on the self-assessment process? What are effective criteria for evaluating and informing self-assessment as a life long learning skill? These were the questions which prompted the following research study at the University of Wisconsin - River Falls College of Education and Graduate Studies.

Method

Graduate students, enrolled in a graduate educational psychology course, were asked to document and present a self-assessment portfolio of their learning experiences. These graduate students were either experienced teachers, counselors, or practicing teachers. Students were given instructions to be as creative as possible and minimal guidelines were provided for content so that they might explore the concept of self-assessment without preconceived notions. The concept of a reflective portfolio was introduced through lecture and example. The teachers were encouraged to follow a particular model where artifacts are collected and organized according to goals and/or professional accomplishments. The presentations of the students' self-assessment portfolios were video taped and later analyzed to design a method for providing more explicit, consistent, objective, and evaluative feedback. The goal was to give each student specific comments on the breadth and depth of their self-assessment.

The video tapes were viewed by two graduate assistants who were given a definition of self-assessment. Self-assessment is a system of understanding and interpreting one's own behaviors which subjectively and objectively allow an individual to analyze and critique those behaviors. Next, they were asked to watch the video tapes of the presentations and generate a list of behaviors which fit the definition of self-assessment. The following list of behaviors was generated during the observation of the video taped presentations:

1. Displayed ongoing reflective thought
2. Applied what had been learned
3. Sought feedback from a variety of sources
4. Took control of their own learning
5. Gained confidence, because they became less dependent on extrinsic forces for measure of accomplishment
6. Acquired knowledge inside and outside of class

7. Shared knowledge with others
8. Participated in cooperative learning
9. Displayed traits of a "life long learner," i.e. a strong desire to learn more

The students and course professor then used the list of behaviors with a range of scores from 0 to10 to create a self-assessment evaluation tool. The tapes were reviewed independently and each portfolio presentation was scored by the two graduate assistants and the course professor. When the group shared their independent scoring, they tape recorded the conversation and generated a list of concerns and issues which were eventually turned into suggestions (see the following section entitled Discussion for a complete listing.) The discussion also yielded a suggestion for providing descriptive anchors for the scale and eliminating the number scoring. It was also evident that some of the original list of behaviors were combined or subsumed when used to evaluate the portfolio presentations.

Results

What resulted after the third viewing of the tapes and adapting the behavior list was the following rubric:

Recognizing and Evaluating Self-Assessment

1. **Displays ongoing reflective thought**

Externally motivated reflection	Reflections are self-motivated and on-going (more spontaneous)	Planned goal oriented reflection and evaluation for self-enhancement

LOW ..... **HIGH**

2. **Applies what has been learned**

Applies knowledge when externally motivated to focus on a problem	Personally sets goals for future applications	Accomplishment of goals, evaluates and sets more goals. (Cyclical process)

LOW ..... **HIGH**

3. **Seeks feedback from a variety of sources**

Accepts and incorporates input from others	Seeks feedback by forming cooperative learning groups	Formal presentations to colleagues to share knowledge and receive feedback

LOW ..... **HIGH**

4. **Takes control of their learning**

Accepts and completes assignments	Acquires knowledge independently and seeks additional resources	Develops and tests hypotheses. (Life-Long Learner)

LOW ..... **HIGH**

5. **Student gains confidence, less dependent on extrinsic forces for a measure of accomplishment**

Motivated by peer pressure and superior's approval	Less concerned with grades and more concerned with growth and a sense of accomplishment	Positive sense of professional competence and willing to risk failure for the sake of accomplishment

LOW ..... **HIGH**

Discussion

The following recommendations emerged after analyzing the video tapes for evaluation and providing feedback for the self-assessment portfolio presentations. Many of the recommendations came from the students (who were teachers) as they described or talked about the process of compiling their portfolios.

- Teachers must be participants in designing their self-assessment. They should have several options or choices in the process.
- Remember not to overwork the point of what to include in a portfolio to the extent of threatening the teacher's sense of ownership.
- Teachers must feel able to take risks: self-assessment as a form of evaluation requires that teachers feel comfortable in taking risks. This can only be accomplished with administrative support.
- A relaxed supportive environment is essential, students must feel comfortable sharing their strengths and weaknesses, goals and reflections.
- Visuals, such as photographs or flow charts, in addition to an interview, help to further clarify important points within the portfolio.
- Depth seems more appropriate then breadth.
- Examples such as metaphors or personal anecdotes help clarify student levels of advancement with reference to established evaluation anchors.
- The richer the example or sample product in the portfolio, the easier it was to evaluate the type and depth of self-assessment.
- Effective evaluation of self-assessment is a formative process. This practice informs our teaching and learning in an on-going manner.
- Evaluation of self-assessment should be conducted by persons with the same subject specialization.
- Development and enhancement of a positive self-concept must be a critical factor in the evaluation process or self-assessment will not continue effectively.
- Portfolio structure and goals reflect both career positioning and personality. These individual differences should be taken into account for evaluation. Presentations seem to induce higher arousal levels which encourage more in-depth self-assessment in some. As they talked, they revealed more than they had previously thought about. For others, the oral presentations did not begin to share the depth that the written captions reflected.
- Portfolio evaluation is best utilized as a form of learning. The evaluation of self-assessment is also intended to be a pedagogical endeavor. The aim is improvement of the educational process and the enhancement of life-long learning.

- Students gain confidence in their own accomplishments, become less dependent on extrinsic forces for measure of accomplishment as they practice self-assessment, they become life-long learners.
- The portfolio is a good tool to organize and motivate the learner in the self-assessment process.
- Development of a "Life-Long Learner" is the pinnacle of self-assessment.

Conclusion

This study has generated an insightful look into reflective portfolios and their possible use to develop professional growth in education. The focus of the this study was to develop a structured, relevant, and helpful tool to collect feedback in the assessment of reflective portfolios. Teachers and administrators can use the information developed in this study to take advantage of portfolios as a tool to foster growth in their field. The list of behaviors, the list of recommendations, and the rubric will make the process and product of portfolio assessment much more useful to everyone involved in the process. It will be clear to teachers what is expected of them in the portfolio process and it will be clear to administrators how to assess the portfolios. It is certain that this study has only touched the surface concerning a structured way to assess reflective portfolios but at least it is a start.

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